THE LETTER WITH THE BLUE STAMP

Story *of* the Fast Mail Service of Uncle Sam *and* Some Facts of the Arduous Task of His Employes

THIS story of the fast mails is not fiction, although it is told in narrative form. There is no class of men in the employ of the United States government who are paid less and who take more risks than railway mail messengers. With them are their brother workers, the postoffice clerks, who must be keenly alert at every minute of the time they are on duty. That the public may better understand the railway mail and postoffice services' arduous duties, the following was secured for The Sunday Journal Magazine.

By "Illowa."

I WAS a letter of much importance. I was important because I was one of the agents absolutely necessary to the successful close of a great business transaction. Without me the deal never would have been closed, would have been a total failure, and while the whole affair would, without me, have been a failure, I, too, with all the rest of it, would have failed but for the assistance of a number of others, all of whom played a more or less important and in every case a necessary part in making my life a success. As to whom belongs the greatest credit, you may judge from my story.

Do not wonder that I know all things by their right names from the start. A letter is born into full grown consciousness of all things existing. The nature of the business with which I was connected and the message which I conveyed are not a necessary part of this story. My purpose is to relate to you the story of my trip, to tell you how I did my part, or if you please, how others did it for me and how I beat out the private messenger.

Now in the first place, I was written at 2 o'clock p. m., October 3, 1908. I was immediately sealed up and addressed to Mr. John Jones, Lago, Idaho. Two stamps were placed on my cover, an ordinary 2-cent and a special delivery stamp. It was necessary to the success of my trip that I be in Mr. Jones' hands not later than 4 o'clock on the 5th. I had more than 1,000 miles to travel, including a trip on horseback at the finish. Lago, where I was going, was a country place where a postoffice had just been established. There was no telegraph line running into it, and indeed such secrecy seemed to be necessary that it is doubtful if this quicker means of communication would have been used, anyway.

After I had been fixed up and made ready to go on my journey a further conference was held between the two men who created me. One of them said that as the postoffice at Lago was a new one, the postal people would very likely not know where it was, and that I might be delayed on that account. Then it was decided that the only safe way was to send a private messenger. But as I was all ready an office boy was called in and told to mail me at once, so that if anything should happen to the private messenger I might get through on time after all.

Reach the Box.

The messenger boy ran with me down the street to a corner where there was a letter box, into which he dropped me and left me there. There were a number of other letters in the box. I do not know how long they had been there, but I know we waited for a long time, as it seemed to me, and I became very impatient to be on the go, for I knew that my time was limited and it would not take many such delays as this to spoil my trip and make my whole life useless. I began to feel certain that the private messenger would win.

After a long time we were all taken we were flying along at a rate that almost made me dizzy. Being in a out of the box by a man in a gray suit of clothes. This man had an official appearance and an important air about him which perhaps was responsible for my feeling that surely now we would begin to move. But I was somewhat disappointed, for that gentleman seemed to be taking life very leisurely as he went from box to box, removing therefrom the letters. Eventually, however, he arrived with us at the postoffice. Here I learned at least one reason for his aristocratic appearance and movement. As he entered the office he passed a man with a very fatigued appearance and a battered satchel, in his hand, who greeted my carrier with: "Hello! Brown, I hear that congress has given you fellows another raise."

"You bet," answered Brown. "It takes us fellows to get the raises."

"How do you do it?" asked the tired one.

"It is our organization," said Brown. "It is not what we do. Here we are with six hours of easy work a day, our feet under the table at home for every meal while you fellows are slaving away on the road, going hungry when you ought to eat, getting indigestion by eating when you ought not to eat, because it is the only time you have to eat. Paying your own expenses, working your heads off when nature demands sleep, worrying over delayed trains and getting yourself killed or crippled in wrecks. None of your kind of a life for me when I can get better pay with such an easy time here. Pay more attention to your organization and less to your work and you will get more."

"I wonder if he is not right?" the tired one muttered as he walked away.

The carrier now walked over to a table upon which we were thrown in a great heap. Here a number of men were assorting and facing up the letters and running them through a machine. When I came out of this machine black lines were stamped across my stamps, and beside them was a circle in which were the words: "Portland, Or., Oct. 3, 1908, 5 p. m." I did not seem to be moving very rapidly. About three hours gone by and not yet really started. I began to feel discouraged.

Next we were carried to another table above which was a case of pigeon holes or boxes, each box bearing a label. I was placed in a box labeled: "Poca. & Port. Tr. 5-Idaho." This gave me some degree of hope, for I thought it might be fast enough to overcome the long time required to get started. Soon the box was filled and we were tied into a package, myself on top and a slip on top of me, so placed as to expose to view my special delivery stamp and bearing a label similar to the one on the box. Then the package was thrown into a

INTERIOR OF MAIL CAR SHOWING HOW THE R. M. S. CLERKS MUST WORK IN NARROW SPACE, AND WORK HARD AT THAT

pouch which hung mouth open in a rack. A lot of other packages were thrown in and then the pouch was pulled out of the rack, its mouth closed and locked, a label reading: "Pocatello & Portland Tr. 6 No. 1" inserted in the label slide. The pouch was trundled across the floor on a truck and thrown into a wagon with screened sides and back, which rattled away for a distance and stopped. The pouch was transferred to a large truck with other pouches and sacks and taken through the depot yards to the mail car.

The pouch had no sooner struck the floor of the car than it was seized and thrown upon a table, the lock quickly removed and the mouth jerked open. Before we had time to breathe the packages were flying about, some into pouches and others on tables where they were cut and the letters distributed into boxes, one by one, but very rapidly for all that. I soon found myself edged up in the side of a box labeled: "Butte & Salt Lake City Tr. 8 No. 1."

I now began to regain confidence in the success of my trip. Here was an atmosphere different from that which I had passed. Things were done with a vim and a snap which I had not heretofore noticed. I had not long to watch the work being done as our box was soon filled and the package tied out to make room for more. When we were thrown into a pouch great heaps of packages were stacked upon the tables and under them, while pouch after pouch was being thrown into the car.

Now the car began to move and soon pouch and covered up with other mail, I know very little of the trip from Portland to Baker City. After many hours of rapid traveling with an occasional stop, we arrived at Baker City, where our pouch with a lot of other mail was quickly transferred to a car of the east division of the same run.

The box in which I was placed was near the center of one end of the car, which was arranged similar to the one in which I came from Portland. The letter cases and pouch racks were confined to one end of the car, while the rest of the car was taken up with paper racks and stalls, in which great, orderly piles of sacks were placed, to be removed one by one and thrown upon a table where they were opened and their contents distributed.

From my position I could see all that was being done in the car. Although they had not yet left the initial point these men must have been at work for several hours, as large quantities of mail had already been distributed.

Now the mail came in with a rush, loads of paper mail and pouches, and the strictest economy of space was necessary in order to leave the men standing room in which to perform distribution. At last some one called, "That is all of it," the doors were slammed shut, and again we were on the move.

Men of Steel Nerves.

With all the confidence which I had learned to place in these men of steel nerves, upon whose shoulders seemed to rest a large portion of the responsibility of the entire department of which they were a part, when I viewed the great confusion of mail which they must handle, piece by piece, I felt that it must be a long run if they were to complete their distribution. I called it confusion, and so it was to me, but to them it seemed to be strictest order.

Each man knew just what to do first and just when to do this or that, and no time was lost in doing it. I heard one of the younger men asked another if he thought they were "stuck," and the answer was, "We are never stuck as long as there is one minute left in which to do the work."

And so they worked away, with eye gliding from piece to piece, and hand shooting out with lightning-like rapidity, following the lead of the eye or moving mechanically with an apparent knowledge of its own, and depositing its burden in the proper place with unerring accuracy. They moved swiftly, every muscle aquiver, every eye and every nerve on the alert. It seemed to me that every ounce of energy in mind and body must be called into action. Here were no time-savers. With these men it was not a matter of six, or at the most, eight hours of leisurely labor and then home to family, regular, home-cooked meals, recreation and rest. "Here," says the clerk, "is a big No. 1 which must be cleaned up between here and Nampa. It is a little more than I have ever been able to put under the labels before, so I will have to show a little better speed today than usual." To him it does not matter that when the number one is done and Nampa is passed he is in the same fix with other mail; that the same supreme effort will be required then that he is using now. He will drink some more strong coffee and go at it anew. What will be his condition when he reaches the end of his run? Go down there with him and see what he looks like when he leaves his car.

My Great Importance.

To the great mass of mail, of which I was one atom, every motion said as plainly as words: "Messengers of business and love, of hope and failure, of life and death; messages of great importance or useless, wastebasket trash though you may be, it matters not to us, we will get you home at the earliest possible moment."

When we stopped at Shoshone, the conductor called in at the door: "No. 1 wrecked at Wapi. Fireman and two mail clerks killed. Will be held up three or four hours."

"That means that we will have to rework that Butte & Salt Lake Tr. 8 mail," said one of the clerks, as he returned to his work.

Now, this interested me, for I was a part of that mail. I gathered from what I now overheard that it had been intended that I should go over the Salt Lake route to Oxford, where a close connection was made with the stage that would take me to my destination. Now, we would not connect that train at Pocatello that the wreck had held us out, so to send the letters for certain towns in those packages meant a delay of about 30 hours. Here I became very uneasy, for it looked as if after all my life was to be a total failure. But the clerks new more about it than I and saw a way to get me home without any serious delay. To send me via Soda Springs meant a saving in time of about seven hours if we missed the southern connection.

The track was cleared so we could get through in a shorter time than at first estimated. If on time we had one hour and 30 minutes to make the connection. We were now two hours and ten minutes late. Could we make up that much between here and our terminal?

"What engineer have we tonight?" asked one of the clerks.

"Smoky Jack," was the answer.

"What engine?"

"The 410."

"Good! Then we will risk making the connection."

To me this came as great, good news, for it gave me what seemed to be a good chance to be a success, while the other way mentioned would make my failure a certainty. But of course, they did not know that. It was their business to get me to my destination at the earliest time possible.

I now become greatly excited, and why should I not? I was passing through the crisis of my life. Forty minutes' time must be made up. Would it be done? I imagined a thousand things that might happen to break that connection. Then I would listen to the click, click, clicking of the car wheels on the rails, and I knew that we were moving faster than ever and that my clerk knew his engineer. We would stop at a station and move out again so quickly that my hope arose again to the point of confidence. My confidence was justified. The connection was made, just made with no time to spare.

In a Small Car.

I soon found myself, edge up, in a box labeled "Oxford Dis," in a small apartment car where there was but one man to do the work. He did not seem to have large qualities of mail to distribute, but with all the various kinds, letters and papers and of a kind of which he had to keep records (registered mail), and with getting the mail ready to put off at the stations, and taking more mail on, it certainly kept him on the lookout to get everything done at the right time. Indeed, in that respect, I rather believe that he had the most difficult position of all.

I took my horseback ride from Oxford to Lago, where I arrived in time to make my life a success, and my mission was done. To whom shall be given the greatest credit?

The office boy did his part as best he could.

The letter carrier came for me, I suppose, on schedule time.

The clerks in the postoffice must have been required to know something about what to do with the mail, but to them the mail for certain trains was tied out and dispatched at certain times, whether all was in or not, and whether the train was on time or not.

Having passed through the hands of all of them, I will say so that all can hear, that the railway postal clerk is my hero. I have told you how he works himself to exhaustion with the one thought to get his work done correctly. My people were afraid that the boys of the R. M. S. would not know where the new office, Lago, was. The railway postal clerk knew where it was, knew how to get there under ordinary and extraordinary conditions. He not only knew what the schedules were—he knew his engine—he knew his engineer. He knew and heeded all the influences surrounding his work. Suppose I had been dispatched via Soda springs. That would have meant my failure, and with me the failure of a great business transaction, but no fault could have been found with my clerk. According to schedule he was too late to connect the south bound train so the next dispatch would have been via the eastern connection so that I would have arrived at my destination at noon on the second day out of Pocatello as the stage only runs three time a week. How could he know that 40 minutes could be made up and that I might reach Lago on time?

I almost forgot the private messenger. I have learned since my return east in the pocket of Mr. Jones that he went via the eastern route and so had to wait over in Soda springs until the next day. He arrived at Lago the day after we left there.

DEATH VALLEY NATURE'S CHEMICAL STOREHOUSE

Graphic Description of the Famous Sink Written for The Journal by One Who Has Made an Especial Study of Its Strange Features--Land *of* Queer Reptiles *and* Poisonous Insects

By Clarence E. Eddy.

WITH all that has been said about Death Valley public ideas in regard to it are very peculiar and often laughable.

Death Valley is said to be nearer hell than any other place on earth, so hot that the devil himself will not stay there, but prefers rather to live in Chicago.

Death Valley may have been the original site of Eden. Serpents are still there and fig trees flourish to some extent.

Death Valley a Vast Theme.

I would like to be able to write an article on Death Valley, telling nothing but the truth in regard to it, for it would be something new, and never before accomplished by anyone, but the public will not expect of me to succeed fully, where all others have failed.

It is indeed difficult to speak adequately of Death Valley without having to use a semblance of hyperbole and prevarication, for all great subjects inspire awe and ecstasy of expression.

Death Valley, the supreme bugaboo and great horror of southeastern California which boomers use to inspire a wild awe and wonderment on the part of tenderfeet is still in itself a worthy subject for any pen. If it could but be truly depicted in all its vast solemn, forlorn desolation it would afford a stranger and more striking article than any that has ever been written about it. As a mineral zone it as a matter of fact has much merit, of which I will speak later.

Stories of Riches.

In addition to the alleged awful death-dealing, gruesome and ghastly attributes of Death Valley, it is often represented as a vast and fabulous treasure-field, which if a man could successfully traverse he would become as rich as the trusts from the wealth of precious metals to be picked up by the wayside.

In fact, there is a general opinion prevailing that if a man could only get on "the other side" of Death Valley he would get rich.

A man once said to me: "If you ever get on the other side of Death Valley, I wish you would try and break me off a few pieces of the formation over there. I always wanted some free gold specimens."

Now, I don't know which is the "other side" of Death Valley. I have been on all sides; in the middle and back and forth a great deal, yet Rockefeller does not seem to recognize me.

Since early last May I have crossed Death Valley nine times, but I would still deign to pick up and pocket an ordinary $20 gold piece if it seemed to be lying about loose. It is a fact that I found plenty of precious metals out there, but they were so mixed up with other substances I have not yet got them successfully separated.

Contagious Delirium Tremens.

When I first saw Death Valley I was very much impressed with its wonders and could have written many pages about it, but soon its awful solitudes palled upon me. Once when I was 100 miles from civilization and helpless with the heat I was represented in a long, so-called interview, as saying that Death Valley, aside from its tremendous piles of loose mineral treasures was a fine place for a health resort, presumably an instant cure for tuberculosis, and such other ills as flesh is heir to, but I know that it is not true.

Death Valley Scotty's Mine.

But since so much has been attributed to me in the press all over the United States and a big syndicated article on Death Valley has recently appeared mysteriously under my name, I am now glad of the opportunity to tell for the first time my own story of Death Valley and what I was doing there.

I was not exactly looking for Death Valley Scotty's mine in the manner alleged, though I am of the opinion that Scotty has a mine, and in fact I have considerable evidence to that effect. Scotty claims that the Indians put him onto his mine, which is quite likely, as the Indians there are cunning prospectors, having learned it the time of the old Panamint silver excitement in the '70's and also from the Spaniards at an earlier date.

The Indians at Johnson's Canyon, when asked of the whereabouts of Scotty and his mine, point to the south with a grunt and say: "Maybe so, ten miles."

Scotty's mine, of course, is not so fabulously rich as supposed, but good enough to keep Scotty well supplied with money, and he is after all a judicious spender, a shrewd, genial sort of a fellow who delights in causing excitement and keeping the public guessing. Scotty is all right; he is a better and wiser man even than he is represented to be, but it would not do a fellow much good to find Scotty's mine, for he has that cornered and one might get into trouble prowling around his premises, for he has some men out there who guard his interests with much less politeness than Scotty himself speaks of them when out in civilization.

Encountering Scotty's Scouts.

When alone and unarmed in the heart of Scotty's country last August I came upon a black-whiskered, bandit-looking sort of fellow, mounted upon a mule and carrying a rifle. I hailed him, but he would not answer and acted very suspiciously, so we each climbed up opposite mountain sides and made out of each other's sight, but I made even better time on foot than the other man did on muleback.

Scotty says a thousand men could hide successfully in those vast desolate mountain canyons for years, and by personal observation I am about convinced that this is true. Surrounded everywhere by 100 miles of hot desolation it is out of the protection of the law and the world would never hear of those who did not return.

About the Indians.

Indians are not very numerous in the valley but they are an ignorant, suspicious, treacherous-looking lot, always spying to see what strangers are up to in their country. They did not make any open demonstration against me but were always anxious that I should go away. They constantly reminded me that it was their country, and inquired about my business.

Shot in the Dark.

Once when I was out at night alone, under some trees on the higher mountains, I was suddenly awakened just before morning by a gun fired almost in my face. I saw the flash as I came to my feet in bewilderment. At first I thought it a practical joke, and pulling my revolver, I fired in the air and called but received no answer. It occurred to me an Indian had crept up in the shadows of the thick brush where I lay and fired the shot, thinking to stampede me out of the country.

I knew if they really wanted to shoot me they would get me anyway, so I made careful not to look about in the bushes or manifest any further alarm, as Indians are superstitious about harming you if they think you are brave. I lit a pipe of tobacco and laid down again by my fire, not because I was brave, but because I was bewildered and did not know what else to do in the thick black darkness of the canyon, but when the first gray light of the morning arose and I could find my way over the rocks I made back to camp, and this incident, which I don't think had been before related, is the only notable adventure I had in this line in all my four months in and about Death Valley.

Evidence of Indian Depredations.

I don't know as the Indians there are so very bad, but one of the chiefs was up for murder of a white man some time ago, and later the citizens of Ballarat, Cal., the nearest settlement, are said to have banded together and told the chiefs of the renegades that if white men continued to be missed in their country, they would hang the chiefs and send their tribe to the reservation.

Striking a New Camp.

When my partners and I began prospecting last spring we found at Johnson's Canyon on the west side or wall of Death Valley, many ledge croppings, some very large and evidently never before explored by white men, though the Indians had dug on some of them. We were but two men against possibly a dozen Indians under Chief Hungry Bill and as we had little ammunition for our guns we left a few days sooner than we had at first calculated, and though our sampling of the ledges were incomplete, our assay at Rhyolite, Nev., of $28 gold per ton from a 200-foot dyke of quartz-porphyry, caused myself and two partners to rush back for more samples. This second time the same dyke assayed $31.20 in gold and 88 ounces silver.

The Stampede.

We were followed back by men, and our third samplings of the various ledges ranged up to as high as $98, which is fabulous for surface from such large croppings.

We said very little, but our hasty trips were noticed, and as hundreds of men in Nevada are always on the lookout for new strikes, there was the wildest excitement and all kinds of reports were sent out.

The awful heat of the summer came on, but men rushed pell-mell into Death Valley in the effort to reach the scene of the new Eldorado in the cooler heights of the hills beyond. Many of them traveled mostly naked. At night with trains of mules and burros belabored along under loads of equipment. All were blanched by the hot winds and the sun, which registered as high as 136 degrees and caused the adventurers to fall back from the sun-blackened western bars of the great valley.

Bitter complaint was made by men returning, and even my partners and I after the task of acquiring 40 claims in the new field was accomplished, drew back, ragged and weary. But later, approaching the valley near Windgate Pass, on the southwest, we found and located some big galena ledges, and again in latter September crossed the valley by way of Bule Hole, with the heat still at 118 degrees in the shade.

Out of the great sweltering desolation and back again for a breathing spell in the cool air of Utah, we with a mining company of many Utah parties, will plan for more thorough and successful tests of our properties during the coming cooler months, when the conditions of Death Valley are tolerable and it can be more conveniently traversed to the Panamint mountains beyond.

These Panamint mountains, snow-capped in winter, loom up out of the desolate wastes west of Death Valley like a great oblong cragged snow-crowned island in an ocean of dim and undulating deserts.

Death Valley itself is a vast white sunken rift between the walls of the Paramints on the west, rising to an elevation of 11,000 feet above the sea, and the dry, desolate Funeral range on the east where almost sheer cliffs stand 6,000 or 7,000 feet above the valley's bed.

Into the Valley.

The descent into Death Valley from the west is made through passes and canyons to the Funeral range. It is easily accessible by autos and wagons. A favorite way is to go south from Rhyolite, Nev., out over the Amargosia valley 27 miles to the new mining town of Lee, Cal., at the foot of the Funeral range, thence over the summit of the range eight miles to Schwab, Cal., and thence 10 miles down the deep and picturesque Echo canyon, thence past where the warm waters of Furnace creek rush out of the earth and four miles on to that wonderful and welcome little oasis, known as the Borax Smith Death Valley farm in the edge of Death Valley, 178 feet below the level of the sea.

Death Valley Oasis.

This farm is maintained by Mr. Smith, the multi-millionaire of Borax fame, for the benefit of his borax industries in and about the valley. By utilising the waters of Furnace creek for irrigation purposes at this point over 100 acres of the former wild alkaline soil has been brought under a fine state of cultivation, but to produce this little farm has required an expenditure of $10,000.

In the beautiful meadows of this farm, made seemingly more beautiful by the surrounding barrenness, six fine crops of lucerne are harvested each year, for the sun always shines, and there are gardens, orchards, vineyards, palm and fig trees and fountains.

Indians at Work.

There are all kinds of poultry and livestock on this ranch. The overseer, W. A. Northrup, hires mostly Indians to do the work. Picturesque camps of these Death Valley redmen are about the waters and groves of the premises the year round. They seem to prefer to take their pay mostly in canned goods and calico.

She Wanted a Man.

There are less men than women in the Death Valley tribe. I saw a pretty little squaw in a pink dress and barefooted. I asked her if she was married. She said, "No katchum," and though rather bashful, she seemed coquettish and inclined towards matrimony. As she apparently could get no husband she had imprisoned a jackrabbit, a peewee and a desert lark as pets. Both the jackrabbit and the peewee looked badly hen-pecked, but the lark twittered about and allowed himself to be loved by the Indian maiden. She rode about, sometimes bareback and astride, a blue burro of which these Indians have a species. I asked her if she smoked cigarettes. She said, "Yes, of course I does," so I gave her and the others of the tribe some packages of tobacco. But I must return to the description of the scenery.

Sublime Desolation.

Everywhere as you looked beyond the Death Valley farm all is desolation. The Funeral range is piled against the east and the Panamints against the west, but the Panamints do have snow on their heights a part of the year and lots of scrubby timber, and plenty of water at the heads of their big canyons.

Heat of Hades.

The valley, over 100 miles in length, and from about 15 to 30 miles in width, blends into a blue haze of heat as you look to north or south. The sun shines relentlessly every day during most of the year, and by night the overheated atmosphere wakes in the commotion of winds, warm as the breath of a furnace.

But even the heat of midsummer does not seem to cause acute suffering; it just makes you feel depressed and downright lazy. To keep cool you drink so much water that you are bleached out all the time. I actually drank from about 16 to 24 pounds of water per day when in the sun. The water carried in an ordinary canteen becomes as hot as you would wish to use in a bath tub, but you must drink it and it seems comparatively cool.

The clothing you wear in Death Valley comes to have a scorched smell from the heat of the sun, but you stand it somehow and can traverse the valley at any time of year, though it is extremely hot in June, July, August and September.

Sun, Sand, Sage and Solitude.

Sun, sand, sage and solitude are the features of Death Valley. The lower portion of its bed attaining about 280 feet below sea level consists of unknown depths of sluggish slime, bitter with borax, salt, nitrate, in fact a wonderfully complex and powerful solution of natural chemicals.

This strong chemical solution I know from repeated observation disintegrates and dissolves the very rocks, much as would cyanide.

Death Valley a Vast Cyanide Vat.

The lower bed of Death Valley is a vast natural cyanide vat and has dissolved everything that has been precipitated into it through the ages.

All the untold thousands of millions of tons of quartz and formations bearing the precious metals that have been precipitated into the valley from the sundered belts and zones of the surrounding mountains lie there in great lakes of solution for miles and miles. Crusted over by the suns of centuries and veiled by the forlorn brooding solitude these vast and peculiar mineral deposits have been overlooked by everyone. But this sea of mineral solution may some day prove very valuable. The field is of such extent as to be beyond the reach of monopoly, and seeing no way to otherwise demonstrate my discovery, I make free to mention it, hoping it may soon be verified by scientific investigation.

To Dredge for Treasures.

These strong natural chemical combinations, the result of a great volcanic crater, may have also turned to solution the precious metals which they contain, just as would cyanide.

It may be that dredgers and a system of sizing tanks could glean great mineral values from these vast caldrons of solution in the bed of this strange valley of death.

The present surface of this extinct crater, which was later the bed of a now long vanished sea, is constantly reeking and fermenting like yeast. Under the influx of waters from snows and cloudbursts on the surrounding mountains, its surface for miles is reared into a million miniature fantastic mountains and crags and shapes of endless weird confusion like the labyrinthine wonders of the Inferno.

The indisposition under the heat discouraged me from making extensive tests, but some of this mere surface spume I had assayed gave 50 cents in gold per ton. Extensive beds of earth which would give 50 cents average in placer gold per ton would be considered indeed a bonanza.

Ghost Fires and Gunpowder.

There is a peculiar kind of spontaneous fires that kindle about these Death Valley marshes, and have been seen at night by many.

Once, in crossing the valley by night, my burro kicked up a ball of red fire that sputtered like a "spitting devil" made of wet gunpowder.

Big fires of this sort often seen about the valley at a distance, in the night, are called ghost fires. They are caused by the natural combustive chemicals in these mineral lakes. It was from such substances as this in the similar dry lake bed of the desert of Gobi, that the Chinese are said to have discovered gunpowder as early as the sixth century.

A big company has now gone to work in the south end of Death Valley to make dynamite and other high explosives, of which they claim it contains enough to blow up the world.

Gold in Solution.

At depth these big mineral lakes of Death Valley might be rich beyond belief and they should be investigated by means sufficient to make the necessary tests.

To say that there is not great value existing in these corroded lakes of rusted and dissolved earth strata is to say that there is nothing in the gold belts of the Bullfrog, Goldfield, Tonopah and the belts and zones of the Nevada treasure field, so many of which trend through the rift of this once terrific sundering of the foundation sills of the very globe.

The Mineral Zones.

Great riven belts and zones of highly mineralized granite, slate, lime, porphyry, in fact most of the known mineral-bearing formations are everywhere about Death Valley. They have been denuded and scarred and carried by cloudbursts and all the wrath of elements through the drift of the lost eternities to be dumped into and dissolved in the vast natural cyanide vats of Death Valley and the process is still going on.

Truth Stranger Than Fiction.

These may seem novel ideas but I consider them worth expressing, because they have more plausibility to back them than there is in much that has been written in regard to the valley, and which so long has commanded the printer's space.

It is a known fact that salt, with a few simple chemicals of the right combination will dissolve gold, and as gold exists in sea water, usually to the fraction of a cent per ton, considerable has been invested in the stocks of companies which claimed a process by which to profitably extract this small percentage of gold from the waters of the sea.

So it is plausible that in the hands of energetic promoters vast concerns could be evolved engaging in the extraction of gold and other precious metals from the bed of Death Valley, for it contains the remnant of a sea that has been condensed and simmered down, and its chemical substances combining with those in the erstwhile volcanic crater and augmented by untold millions of tons of rich quarts dissolved into liquid slimes has made a solution infinitely more rich in precious metals than ever were the waters of the sea.

A Golden Sea.

It might even be figured out that the wealth of the world's greatest millionaires would pale before the golden depths of liquid treasures that lie deep down in the dreamless darkness of the unfathomed bed of this mysterious valley. And the kings of earth would hasten to corner it lest the great wealth dispersing among mankind would destroy the potency of the world's hoarded treasures of precious metals.

Origin of Death Valley.

Let us unveil the vistas of the vanished aeons and see by what creative process this colossal wonder of terrestrial desolation came to be.

At some time in the far lost ages the present site of Death Valley and its great surrounding deserts may have been a fair land of verdure, but as the ages drifted, seismic wrath arose from the deep, sundering these verdant vistas from surface to foundation, disclosing to the affrighted heavens a flaming wound in the earth's fair surface, as she staggered amid the stars.

Then awoke fierce lightnings and the thunders raved, and the breath of vast blackness in wild hurricanes engulfed the world. Rains poured in torrents and through that long night of doom arose the reeking, towering flames of this tremendous volcano of the valley of death.

The King of Craters.

Time lulled the tempests and the earth regained its equilibrium, but for ages the great fissure was a reeking, seething caldron where tongues of flame shot upward and black smoke and steam and ashes blew across and blanched the broad expanses that are today still the deserts. And in all this time the alchemy of the under world was working its wonders in the fusing and forming of mineral wealth through reeking fumes in the fissures and crevices of the great crater and its surrounding fields that are today the golden Eldorados of Nevada.

Vulcan at Work.

If one might have stood in those primitive ages upon the peaks of the Paramints when the winds blew strong from the western oceans they would have seen the great craters' columns of high towering smoke and flame wafted to the eastward through the summits of the Funeral range to where lies the Amargosia and the Ralston deserts, or northward along the great Vine range to where are now the treasure cities of Goldfield and Tonopah.

Again if an offshore wind were blowing one might have stood upon Pyramid peak in the eastern verge of the valley and have seen the tongues of flame from that same tremendous crater wrap themselves about the summits of the Paramints on the valley's western verge 11,000 feet above the level of the sea.

Crater Becomes a Sea.

But in still later periods of change the great and fiery crater became a receptacle for the flow of waters, or maybe from subterranean inundation it became an inland sea, its former fires deep-smothered and lulled below a thousand fathoms of surging flood.

And Then the Desert.

Then slowly the waters receded or seeped away through the insecure bottom of the crater sea, leaving its tremendous blackened mountain walls and its bed white with salt and alkali deposits and all the intermingled chemicals of the crater. Thus we see it today, a great white sunken rift defined in rugged mountain walls.

And solitude reigns over and around it. The sun beats down upon it ceaselessly, winter and summer; blanching winds drift and pile the sands upon its sunken bars and its waters are salt and bitter. Bats, owls, centipedes, tarantulas, rattlesnakes and hydrophobus skunks and coyotes dispute even a peaceable existence to the harmless species of lizards, horned toads and chuck-wallas, much less to the prospector and his patient burro who sometimes venture within its precincts.

Great Future of Nevada.

Perhaps not so many treasures are to be found about Death Valley as has been represented, but it has plenty of mineral wealth and will yet be successfully exploited, as will more of the vast volcanic zone which has produced a Tonopah and a Goldfield and scores of other camps.

It would take 100,000 men 100 years to prospect all these far-reaching and forbidden deserts. Mining in Nevada may come down to a more matter of fact basis. Wildcatting may be discontinued and more work required, but it is actually making good to tremendous extent and is sure of a long continued golden future.

Interfering.

He discussed the nation's peril and admonished us to pause
And reflect for just a moment on the referendum laws,
But we'd started out for Coney, and the day was clear and bright,
And we thought we'd let the thing alone—it might come out all right.

Then he ranted of the railroads from his wild Nebraska home,
But we wished he'd get some baseball in his overcrowded dome,
For some team will win the pennant at a not far distant day
And it looks as if he wouldn't care to hiss or hip hooray.

He would have us stop and listen to the evils of the land
When we're starting for the beaches and a good time in the sand;
Does he think we're in our dotage and have nothing else to do
But exclaim: "That's right, by jingo!" when he's pleased to give the cue?

If we seek our homes at nightfall we are there to get some sleep,
Not to puzzle over problems which he says are mighty deep;
Also if we want to worry over something in the night
There's the city cost of living and the hard existence fight.

It he'd just put off his howling for a month 'twould be as well;
There'd be lots of time remaining for the things he has to tell;
When it grows a little cooler we will think about his case
And he'll learn our calm deductions on the last day of his race.

—Charles R. Barnes.

Vain Hopes.

"I hope with all my heart before next summer rolls around that all dogs and all parrots in New York will be banished to happier, freer scenes," said a lover of pets. "It has made my heart ache this summer to see poor, panting dogs straining at leashes, muzzled, not allowed one moment's freedom to scamper over the grass. The city is no place for dogs. It is inhuman to keep them there. I even feel sorry for the grand dogs that ride past me in Fifth avenue with chauffeur, footman, and coachman in attendance. In summer dogs should be scampering over fields and meadows snuffing the breeze and digging up woodchucks, being free and being petted, not yelled at all the time. As for parrots, I wish the noise committee would take them in hand. I have two screaming and squawking on the fire escape by my library window, where I tried to write, all summer. I don't mind street noises, nor the noise of children at play, but when it comes to the silly screeching of a parrot I am ready for a test cure."

Esperanto.

"When I first started out hunting apartments I went through a long, polite dissertation," said the woman who is a haunted look and worry feet. "Now I just go in, say to the elevator man or janitor, 'Apartments?' 'Second?' 'Third?' 'Rear?' etc. I get along just as well, and it saves lots of time. Try it."